



Alcimededes

Since Sir Alec Jeffreys' infamous Eureka moment in 1984, DNA analysis has been hailed (understandably) as a modern marvel. However, the development of DNA technology in resolving paternity disputes is one area where the results may provide more questions than answers.

In 1964, a newborn baby boy was kidnapped from his parents, Chester and Dora Fronczak, from a Chicago hospital by a woman posing as a nurse, and despite extensive searches, the baby was nowhere to be found.¹ Then, roughly a year later, an abandoned baby was discovered in New Jersey and seemingly resembled the lost infant: the FBI were apparently happy to return him to his "parents" on the basis of the shape of his ears. (*"Great work, guys! I've told the Chief. You're up for promotion."*)

Baby Paul was therefore repatriated to Chicago but apparently spent much of his youth wondering why he bore little resemblance to the rest of his family. Results from recent DNA profiling have now shown the boy is not related to the parents. This tragically means that "Paul Fronczak, aged 49" has no real idea as to his true identity, and that the "real" baby Paul may or may not be still alive, also unaware of his real background. Mr and Mrs Fronczak are now elderly, and are said to be too upset to discuss the case in public.

A sad story all round, but neither Pandora nor Sir Alec could have realised that DNA profiling can't be put back in the box, although they might have been aware that *"Curiosity killed the cat."* (*Mind you, moggies can be curious 8 times without ill effects. After that, it's a bit risky.*)

An undercover investigation in the UK in February 2012 by journalists from the Telegraph newspaper implicated two doctors, Dr "R" and Dr "S", in helping with gender-based abortions. This subsequently led to a police investigation but, following advice from the Crown Prosecution Service (CPS), no charges were ultimately brought against the doctors. The Director of Public Prosecution, Keir Starmer, has now issued a less-than-clear statement² in early October 2013, explaining why no criminal charges were brought in this case: his views suggest that gender-based abortion *per se* is not illegal in the UK, which is at odds with advice issued by the BMA in its Handbook of Ethics and Law (2012):³

"Fetal sex is not one of the criteria for abortion listed in the Abortion Act and therefore termination on this ground alone has been challenged as out with the law."

(The BMA advice makes allowances for terminations involving severe fetal abnormalities which are sex-linked.)

Both doctors have been referred to the General Medical Council for consideration. Whether the medical maharishis at the GMC

will be able to clarify these murky waters remains to be seen. Meanwhile, Alcimededes remains flabbergasted as to why a microscopic X is considered far less important than a microscopic Y: "Scrabble™" should be the only occasion where X is worth more than Y.

Latest figures for England and Wales released from the Home Office show that the use of Thomas A Swift's Electric Rifle, TASER to you and me, is on the rise.⁴ Every time that an incident involves a TASER being brandished, whether it is fired or not, is recorded by the local police force, and then forwarded to the Home Office for collation. Recordings are detailed from "Highest use" (1. *The TASER is fired with a live cartridge and makes contact to incapacitate*/ 2. *The TASER is fired but one of the contacts doesn't make contact initially*/ 3. *The trigger is pulled when the TASER is held directly against the subject's body*) down to "Lowest use" (*The TASER is drawn before the subject, but is not fired.*) Between 2009 and 2011, the number of incidents involving TASERS increased year on year, and this is the figure that made the headlines, to just under 8000 incidents from Jan–Dec 2011, although the percentage of TASERS being fired rather than being drawn remained fairly constant at approximately 20%. The report also offers a breakdown on the figures for by force.

Publicity is often given to the mortality surrounding the use of TASERS, although there is little doubt that this device has also prevented deaths since it was introduced in the US in the mid 1970s. Indeed, one of the US TASER manufacturers quotes police figures of 75,000 lives having been saved as a result of TASER deployment.⁵ On this basis, if we all had one, we'd save the world.

A major questionnaire study by the UN of over 10,000 men and 3000 women aged 18–49 in six Asia-Pacific countries addressing the issue of violence and rape was published in September 2013 and provides for depressing reading.⁶ The study defined rape as being "forced or coerced sex" and focused on intimate partner violence and non-partner rape. The results varied considerably from country to country, but were sadly high in all of the countries studied. For instance, in Papua New Guinea, 80% of men admitted to at least one episode of physical or sexual violence against their partners in their lifetime. Papua New Guinea also fared very badly in figures for rape against a female, with 62% of men admitting to rape of an intimate or non-intimate female.

How this 120 page report will bring about change in the countries that were studied remains to be seen as cultural change is

unlikely: an unhealthy dose of cynicism is available for anyone after reading this study.

Following on from a recent public consultation, the Welsh Government has announced that an opt-out system for organ donation will begin in December 2015, making Wales the first country in the UK to take such a leap.⁷ The Human Transplantation (Wales) Act 2013 received Royal Assent in September 2013, and two years of public education into the finer details of the new policy will now be presented. Welsh ministers hope to increase donation rates by approximately 25%. The rest of the UK will certainly watch developments closely as organ donation is both a UK and worldwide concern.

The Scottish Medicines Consortium (SMC) has agreed NHS funding for the drug Nalmefene which supporters believe could be a major weapon in the fight against alcohol addiction.⁸ It is intended for those heavy drinkers but who are not requiring treatment for acute alcohol detoxification, and is therefore a maintenance therapy to be used in conjunction with other forms of support, such as psychological counselling. Studies have suggested that alcohol

consumption decreases by approximately half after six months' use of Nalmefene. Authorities in Wales are giving consideration to this drug as well and are likely to make an announcement in the coming months.

References

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